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EXAMINER

JARRETT, SCOTT L

| ART UNIT | PAPER NUMBER |
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3623

DATE MAILED: 03/27/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/823,581

Applicant(s)

CHEN ET AL.

Examiner

Scott L. Jarrett

Art Unit

3623

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 23 December 2005.
2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-9, 11-15 and 17-20 is/are pending in the application.
4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-9, 11-15 and 17-20 is/are rejected.
7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____.
4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____.
5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
6) ☐ Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

Continued Examination Under 37 CFR 1.114

1. A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submissions filed on December 23, 2005 and November 8, 2005 have been entered.

Applicant's amendments amended claims 1-9, 11-15 and 17-20 and canceled claims 10 and 16. Currently Claims 1-9, 11-15 and 17-20 are pending.

Response to Arguments

2. Applicant's arguments with respect to claims 1-9, 11-15 and 17-20 have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection.

It is noted that the applicant did not effectively challenge the Officially Noticed fact(s) cited in the previous office action(s) therefore those statements as presented are herein after prior art. Specifically it has been established that it was old and well known in the art at the time of the invention:

- to use message queues and/or Object Request Brokers to manage/facilitate the communication/collaboration between systems (objects, agents, etc.) as well as to enable peer-to-peer communications across networks;

Art Unit: 3623

- to specify one or more process/workflow parameters including such parameters as security/access control (scope of variables, objects, etc.), initial data, or the like in a template (class) wherein the templates ensure that all items (processes, agents, contracts, roles, etc.) created (instantiated) using the template are initialized with the appropriate default/initial parameters;

- to associate (include) scope (access control, security, usage, etc.) with a more than one agent, user, role, application, system or the like; and

- to utilize any of a plurality of well known mechanisms, methods, techniques and approaches to exception (error) handling; specifically the well-known technique for exception handling in which a system reviews exception messages (alerts, signals, etc.) as they are received, halting (interrupting) execution when the exception is detected (received) that matches a particular criteria or rule and not halting (continuing) the execution when the exception received does not meet a particular criteria rule.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

3. The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

4. Claim 11-13 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

Claims 11-13 recites the limitation "the data object" in 1. There is insufficient antecedent basis for this limitation in the claim.

Examiner interpreted the claim to read "a data object" for the purposes of examination.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

5. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

6. Claims 1-4, 6-9 and 11-13 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Advanced Decision Environment for Process Tasks (ADEPT) aspects of which are discussed in the following references:

I. Norman, T.J., et al. Designing and implementing a multi-agent architecture for business process management (1996) herein after reference A.

II. Jennings, N.R. et al., Using Intelligent Agents to Manage Business Processes (1996) herein after reference B.

III. Alty, J.L. et al., Advanced Decision Environment for Process Tasks: Overview and Architecture (1994) herein after reference D.

IV. Jennings, N.R. et al., Autonomous Agents for Business Process Management (2000), herein after reference E.

in view of Schulz et al., Architecting Cross-Organizational B2B Integration (2000).

Regarding Claim 1 Advanced Decision Environment for Process Tasks (ADEPT) teaches a computer implement method for managing a collaborative process that involves at least a first player in a first enterprise having a first collaborative process manager and a second player in a second enterprise having a second collaborative

Art Unit: 3623

process manager (agents; reference A: Pages 1-11; Figures 1-4; reference B: Pages 1-12; Figures 1-2, 6-7 and 10; Page 9; Figures 2, 3 and 5; reference D: Pages 1-3; Figures 1-5) comprising:

- defining an inter-enterprise collaborative business process including templates (definitions, standards, process definitions, SLA templates, etc.; reference E:

Paragraphs 1-2, Page 156) and having a plurality of work nodes (agents/agencies executing/managing a plurality of services and tasks collaboratively; wherein each work node has a task role identifier (identifier, agent name, service name) for specifying one of the first player and second player as responsible for execution of the work node reference A: Page 1, Paragraph 1, Line 6-7; Page 2, Paragraph 2, Lines 1-3; Page 2, Paragraph 4, Lines 1-2; Page 6, Paragraph 3, Lines 1-2; reference B: Page 2, Paragraph 2, Lines 1-3; Page 3, Paragraph 1, Lines 1-3; Figure 1, Page 3; Figure 2; reference D: Page 2, Paragraph 2, Lines 3-5; reference E: Last Paragraph, Page 147; Figure 1) and the template (process, process definitions) includes definitions (values, methods, service descriptions, etc.) and a (sharing) scope (hierarchy, topology, organizational relationship, social context, interrelationships, etc.;) that is one of public and process role specific (reference E: Bullets 3-6, Page 168; Paragraph 3, Page 172; "uses AM information about the agent's relationship with the potential service provider (SAME-ORGANIZATION, EXTERNAL-ORGANIZATION) to set the strategy.", Paragraph 1, Page 174);

- the first/second collaborative business process management executing an (first/second peer) instance of the collaborative business process (e.g. multiple

Art Unit: 3623

collaborative process managers/agents/agencies executing an instance of the collaborative business process; reference A: Page 1, Paragraph 1, Line 6-7; Page 2, Paragraph 2, Lines 1-3; Page 2, Paragraph 4, Lines 1-2; Page 6, Paragraph 3, Lines 1-2; reference B: Page 2, Paragraph 2, Lines 1-3; Page 3, Paragraph 1, Lines 1-3; Figure 1, Page 3; reference D: Page 2, Paragraph 2, Lines 3-5; reference E: Last Paragraph, Page 147; Paragraph 1, Page 148);

- specifying the (sharing) scope of at least one process/communication (template, process definition) to keep data private between the first and second collaborative process managers (reference E: "The communication channel between any two negotiating agents is private.", Bullet 5, Page 168; reference E: Bullets 3-6, Page 168);

- wherein the peer instances (first/second) form a logical execution instance (process instance; reference A: Figure 1; reference B: Section 2.2, Pages 6-8; Paragraph 2, Page 12; Bullets 1-3, Page 15; Figures 3, 7); and

- communicate through messages for information exchange and synchronization (information exchange, negotiation, synchronization, communication, etc.; reference A: Page 2, Section 2.1, Paragraph 1, Lines 5-8; Section 2.2 Inter-agent communication, Pages 4-6; Page 7, Section 3, Paragraphs 1-2; Section 3.1 Communication, Pages 8-9; reference B: Page 4, Paragraph 3, Communications Module; reference E: Last Paragraph, Page 163; Table 1).

ADEPT further teaches that the system/method utilizes the well known techniques of encapsulation and abstraction in order to enable the collaborative process

Art Unit: 3623

managers to hide internal/private business processes of the agents and expose/publicly provide only the services/processes necessary to complete the public collaborative process (reference E: "it is neither necessary for the agent requiring the "cost and design network" service to know how this is achieved, nor is it necessary for the department manager to known how to design a network or survey the geographical requirements." Paragraph 1, Page 155; Paragraph 2, Page 154).

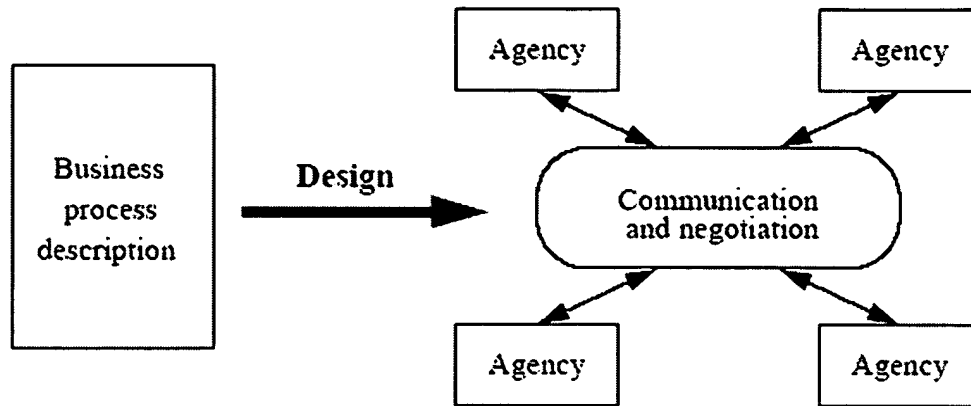


figure 1 Designing an agent-based business process management system.

Figure 1: Figure 1, reference A

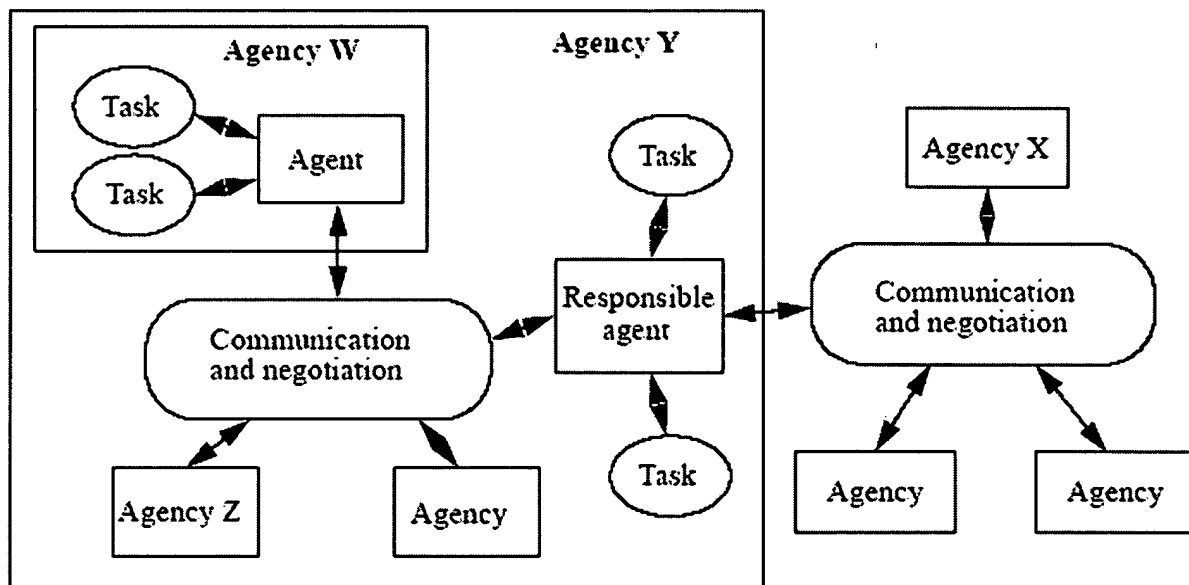


figure 2 The logical hierarchy of agencies.

Figure 2: Figure 2, reference A

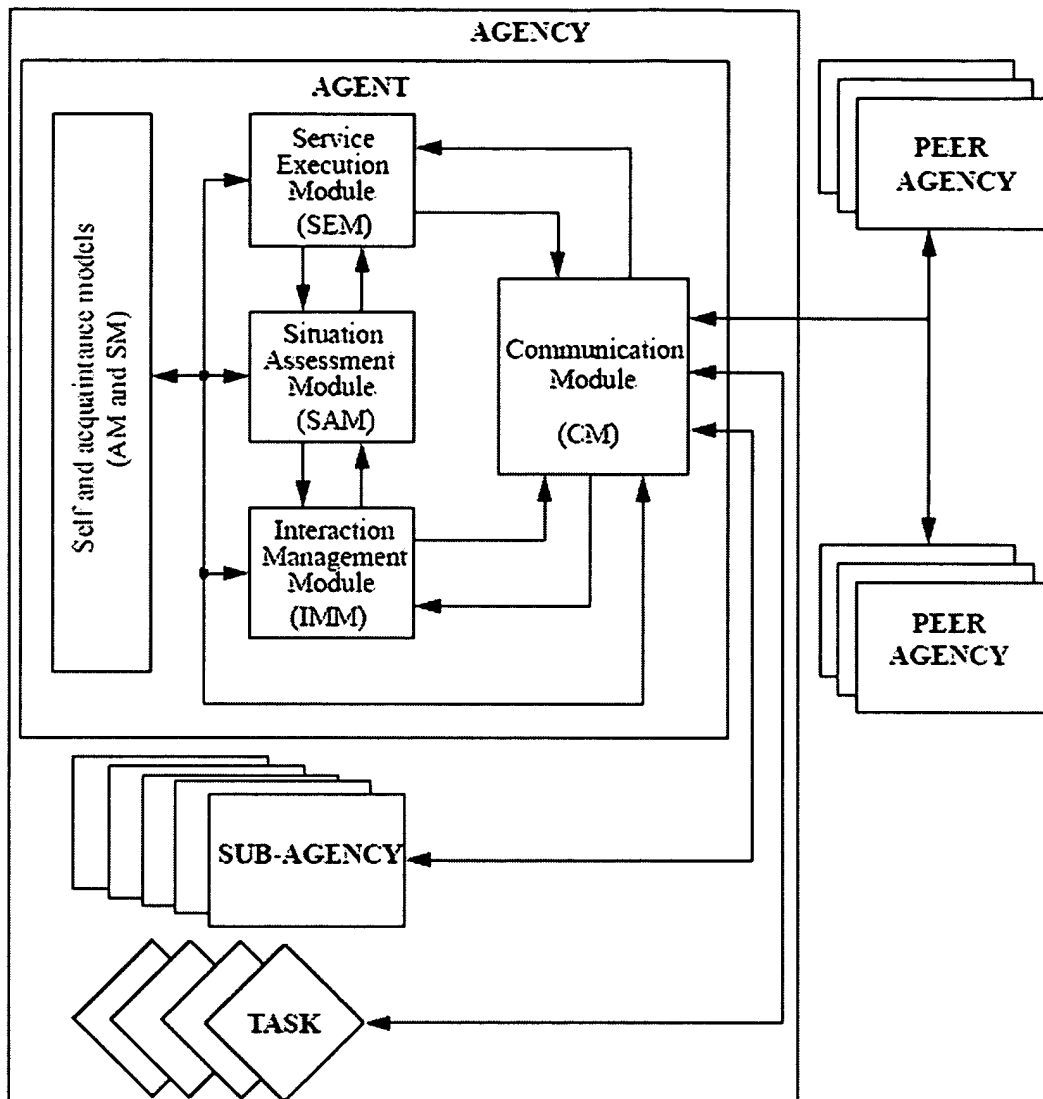


figure 3 An agent architecture.

Figure 3: Figure 3, reference A

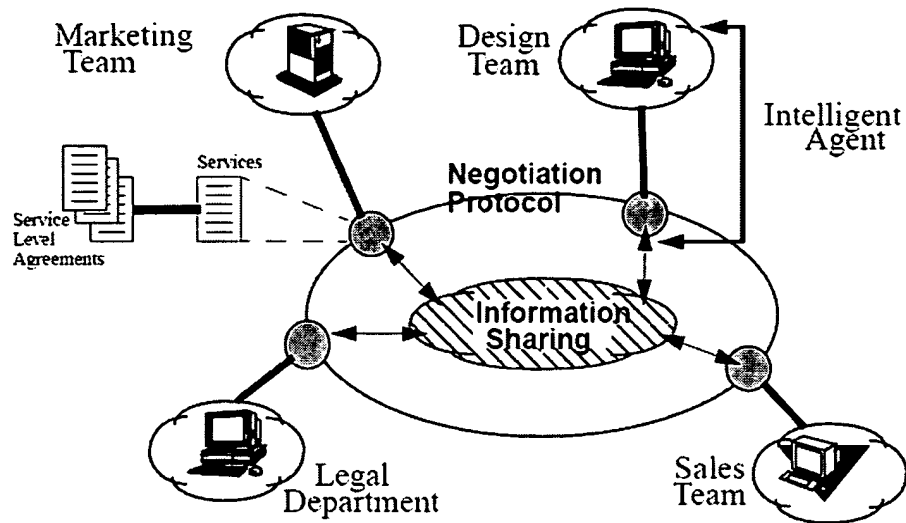


FIGURE 1. An ADEPT Environment

Figure 4: Figure 1; Reference B

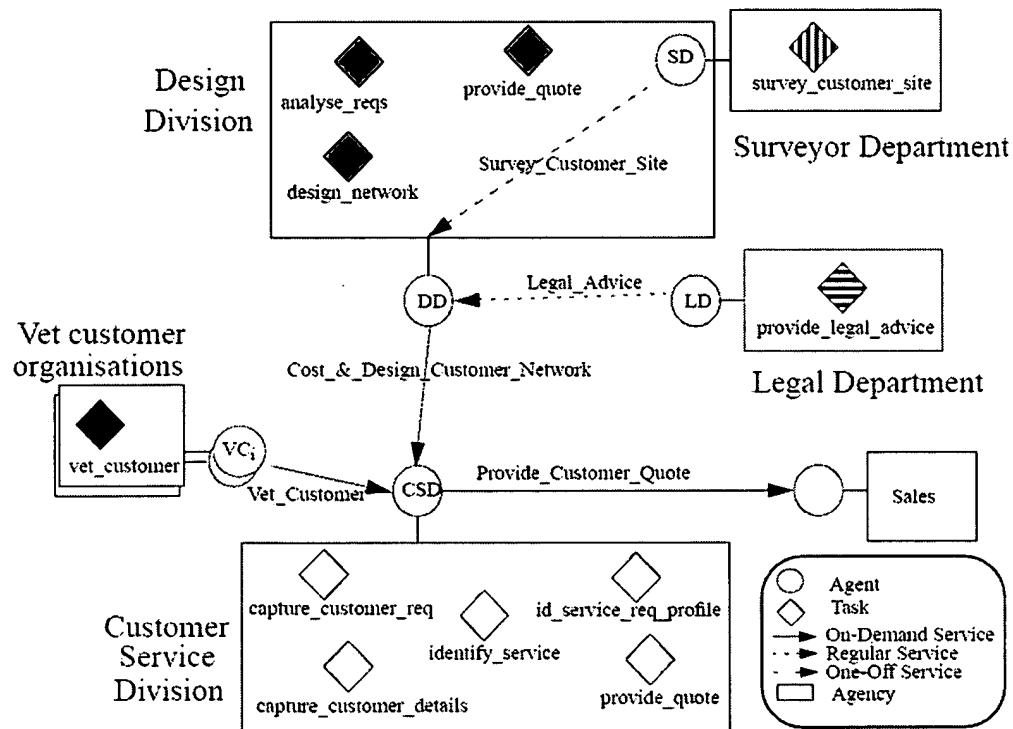


FIGURE 7. Agent System for the Provide Customer Quote Business Process

Figure 5: Figure 7, reference B

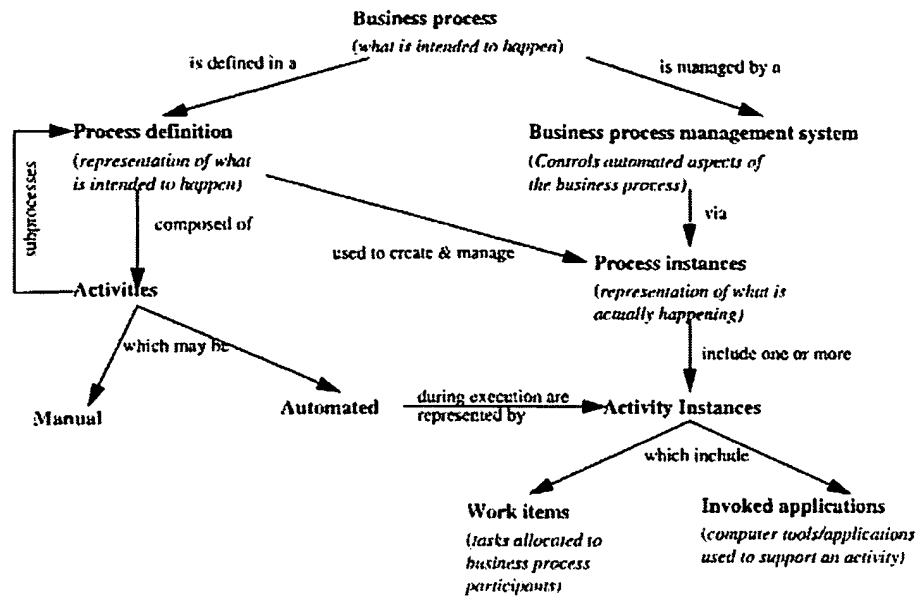


FIGURE 1. Constituent components of a business process (adapted from Hollingsworth (1994)).

Figure 6: Figure 1, reference E

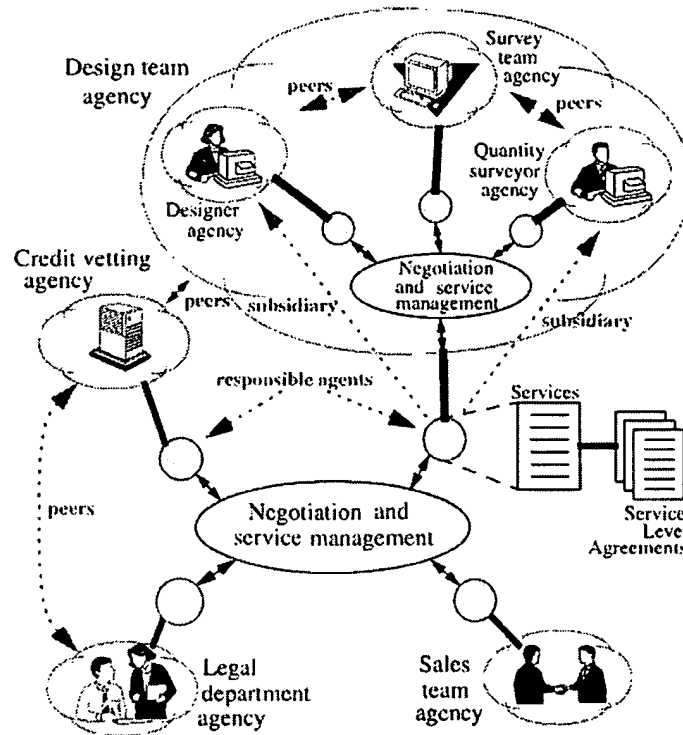


FIGURE 2. The conceptual architecture of an ADEPT system.

Figure 7: Figure 2, reference E

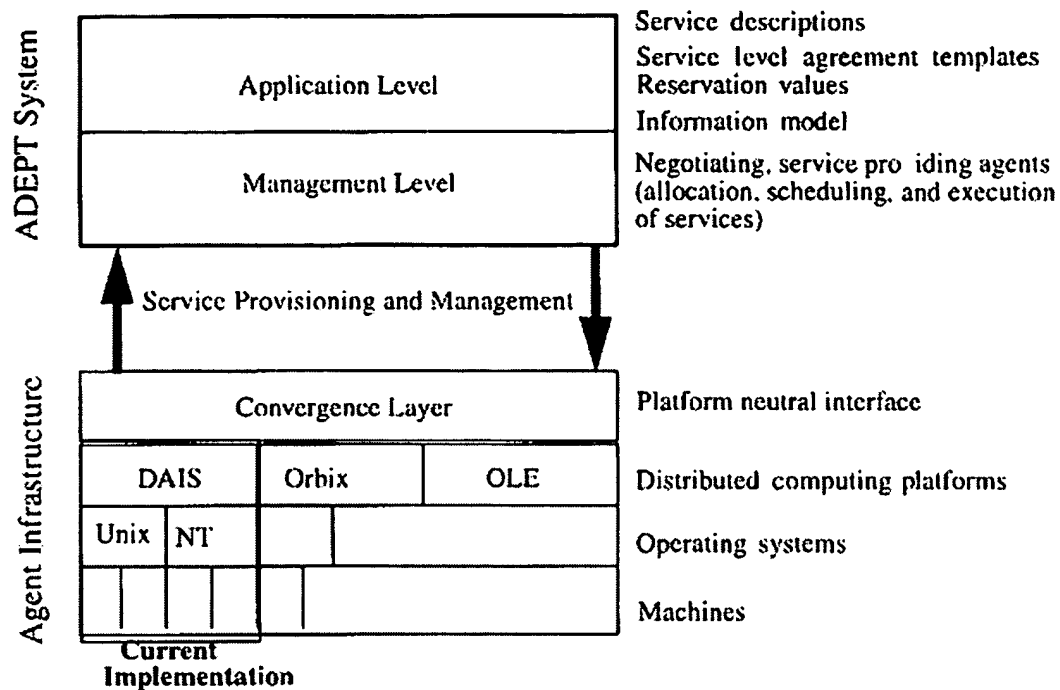


FIGURE 4. The ADEPT implementation system.

Figure 8: Figure 4, reference E

ADEPT does not expressly teach process (template, service, etc.) having a (sharing) scope that is labeled public as claimed.

Schulz et al. teach defining a sharing scope for templated and role-specific business processes and public and private in an analogous art of multi-enterprise collaborative process management (business-to-business, B2B) for the purposes of keeping data (processes, internal operations, etc.) private between the plurality of collaborative process managers ("We propose a model for tiering business processes into organizations' private business processes and shared business processes that interconnect them. Private business processes can expose interaction points and

Art Unit: 3623

shared processes can link to these points so that an overall business process may span two or more organizations. The interaction points can selectively expose information about an organization's processes, process tasks and roles.”, Abstract; Section 4.2 Private and Shared Process Tiers, Pages 95-96; “One possibility is that a role from one organization is only given a permission to invoke an exposed private business process of another organization.”, Paragraph 3, Column 2, Page 96).

More generally Schulz et al. teach a system/method for managing both the private and public (shared) business processes associated with multi-enterprise collaborative process management through enabling the interoperability of collaborative process managers (business process brokers, workflow engines, workflow management systems/methods; Abstract; Section 5 Business Process Framework Architecture, Pages 98-100; Figure 3). Schulz et al. teach that the system/method enables organizations to keep certain aspects of the internal business processes private as well as providing role-based secure access to those exposed processes (Abstract; Paragraph 1, Column 1, Page 93). Schulz et al. teach the availability of a plurality of collaborative business process methods/systems wherein the methods/systems provide templated collaborative processes that include definitions (e.g. RosettaNet, EDOC, ebXML; Section 2 Process Interoperability Standards; Page 93) and that there are a plurality of well known methods (approaches) that enabling inter-process communication (messaging, data sharing, direct interaction/connection, etc.; Section 2.2 Common Interfaces; Page 94).

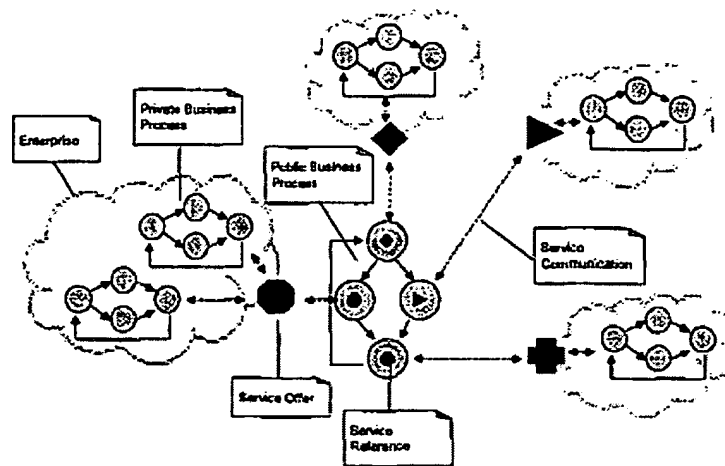


Figure 1 Business Process Tiers

Figure 9: Schulz et al., Figure 1

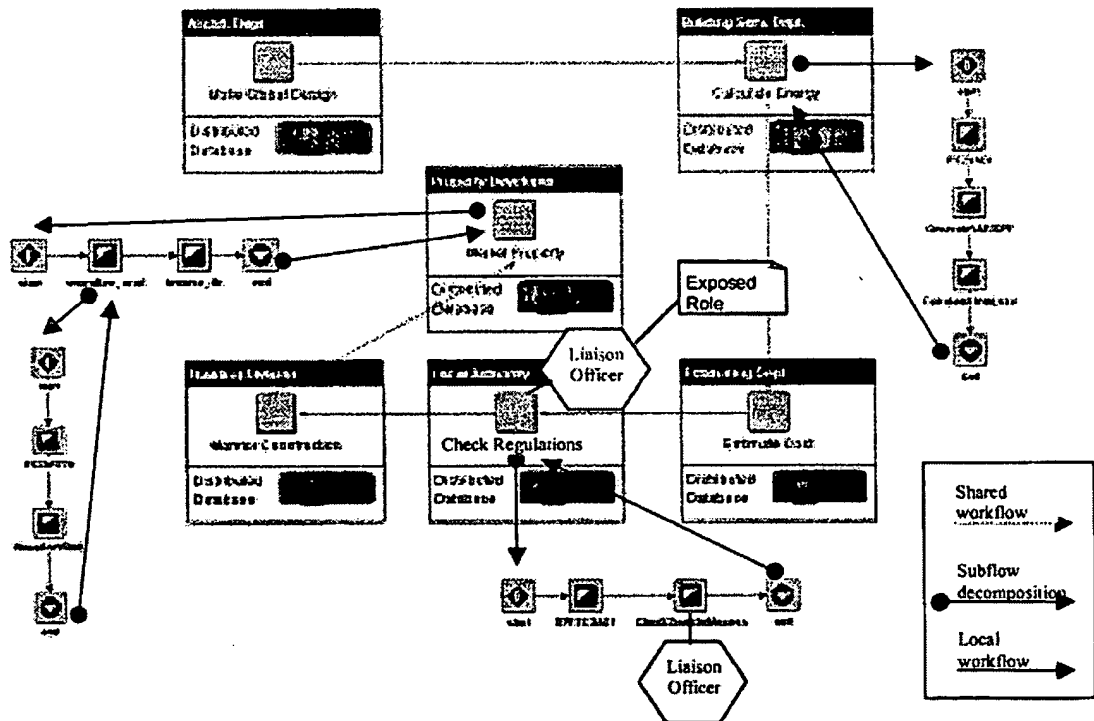


Figure 2: Example of a B2B Process

Figure 10: Schulz et al., Figure 2

It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time of the invention that the system/method for managing collaborative business processes as taught by ADEPT would have benefited from denoting a process's (template, process definition, collaborative process manager interaction) sharing scope as public and/or private in view of the teachings of Schulz et al.; the resultant system/method enabling entities to keep data (processes, internal operations, etc.) private between the plurality of collaborative process managers (Schulz et al.: Abstract).

Further it is noted that the phrases "public" and "sharing" in relation to the scope of a process merely represents non-functional descriptive material and is not functionally involved in the steps recited nor do they alter the recited structural elements. The recited method steps would be performed the same regardless of the specific label used to denote the scope of the process/process template. Further, the structural elements remain the same regardless of the specific label used to denote the scope of the process/process template. Thus, this descriptive material will not distinguish the claimed invention from the prior art in terms of patentability, *see In re Gulack*, 703 F.2d 1381, 1385, 217 USPQ 401, 404 (Fed. Cir. 1983); *In re Lowry*, 32 F.3d 1579, 32 USPQ2d 1031 (Fed. Cir. 1994); MPEP 2106.

Regarding Claim 2 ADEPT teaches a computer-implemented method for managing collaborative multi-enterprise processes wherein the collaborative business processes is executed/managed by a plurality of collaborating agents/agencies (collaborative process managers) that provide (serve) and receive (client) services

(tasks, etc.) and further wherein the collaborative process managers (agents) executing the business process comprise: (service execution, situation assessment, communication, and interaction modules; reference A: Section 3, Pages 7-11; Figures 1-3; negotiation, resource management and enactment modules; reference B: Figure 7; reference D: Section 4, Pages 8-12; reference E: Last Paragraph, Page 178; Paragraph 1, Page 179; Bullet 1, Page 180):

- a collaborative process manager (agent) receiving a task (request for service, message; reference D: Steps 1-2, Page 10);

- a collaborative process manager determining if the task is its responsibility (situation assessment, negotiation, interaction module; evaluate proposals; reference B: Paragraph 4, Page 4; reference D: Steps 2-4; Pages 10-11);

- when the task is the responsibility of the collaborative process manager, executing the current task (enactment, action, accepting proposal, providing/executing request service; invoke service; service level agreement, contract, etc.; reference B: Pages 3, 5; Paragraph 3, Page 4; reference D: Step 4, Pages 10-11); and

- when the task is not the responsibility of the collaborative process manager, not executing (ignoring, forwarding, rejecting, delegating, etc.) the task (reference B: Paragraph 4, Page 4; reference D: Step 3, Pages 10-11).

Regarding Claim 3 ADEPT teaches a computer-implemented method for managing collaborative multi-enterprise processes wherein the when task is the responsibility of the collaborative process manager (agent), executing the task further

Art Unit: 3623

comprises (reference B: Sections 2.1-2.2, Pages 4-8; reference D: Section 4, Pages 8-12; reference E: Pages 161-162):

- scheduling the task (reference B: Interaction Module, Pages 4-5; reference B: situation assessment module, Paragraph 1, Page 5);
- dispatching the task for execution (forwarding, delegating, resource management; reference A: Paragraph 1, Page 8; reference D: Section 4.2, Pages 10-11, Steps 1-4);
- upon completion of task generating a message (service results; reference B: Paragraph 3, Page 4; reference D: return, delivery, Steps 3 and 5; Pages 10-11); and
- sending a message (service request) to another collaborative process manager (agent/agency; reference B: situation assessment module, communication module, interaction module, Pages 4-5; Figure 2; reference D: Section 4.2, Pages 10-11).

Regarding Claim 4 ADEPT teaches a computer-implemented method for managing collaborative multi-enterprise processes wherein when the task is not the responsibility of the collaborative process manager, not executing (invoking) the task further comprises (reference B: Sections 2.1-2.2, Pages 4-8; reference D: Section 4, Pages 8-12):

- not executing the task (ignore, rejecting proposal/service request, forwarding/delegating; reference B: Paragraphs 3-4, Page 4);
- waiting for a message (service request) from another collaborative process manager (agent/agency; reference D: Steps 1-4, Pages 10-11); and

- receiving a message (service request) from another collaborative process manager (agent/agency; reference D: Steps 1-4, Pages 10-11).

ADEPT further teaches that the system utilizes messaging/messages to request/provide services amongst the plurality of collaborative process managers/agents wherein the agents to send/receive messages (service requests, service negotiation; reference B: Paragraph 3, Page 4), wait for messages (service requests, proposals), review/analyze messages (situation assessment, proposal evaluation), act upon messages based on the analysis and send messages (status, updates, etc.) after the action/task has been completed (reference B: Pages 4-5; reference D: Steps 1-4, Pages 10-11; reference A: Page 2, Section 2.1, Paragraph 1, Lines 5-8; Section 2.2 Inter-agent communication, Pages 4-6; Page 7, Section 3, Paragraphs 1-2; Section 3.1 Communication, Pages 8-9; reference B: Page 4, Paragraph 3, Communications Module).

Regarding Claim 6 ADEPT teaches a computer-implemented method for managing collaborative multi-enterprise processes wherein the system/method uses a key (cooperation key, handle, identifier, symbol, etc.) to identify a logical instance of the collaborative business process and to correlate and synchronize multiple peer instances of the execution of a single collaborative business process (reference A: Section 3.1, Pages 8-9; Figure 4; reference D: Section 4, Pages 8-11).

Regarding Claim 7 ADEPT teaches a computer-implemented method for managing collaborative multi-enterprise processes employing messages for synchronizing the peer process instances (collaborative agents/agencies) and for exchanging data between process instances; wherein each message includes (reference A: Page 2, Section 2.1, Paragraph 1, Lines 5-8; Section 2.2 Inter-agent communication, Pages 4-6; Page 7, Section 3, Paragraphs 1-2; Section 3.1 Communication, Pages 8-9; reference B: Page 4, Paragraph 3, Communications Module):

- a key (cooperation key, handle, identifier, etc.) for specifying (identifying, accessing, requesting, participating in) a logical process instance (conversationID, informoModelID, etc.; reference A: Page 9; Figure 4; reference B: agent negotiation, Section 2.3, Page 8);
- a local handle (name, address, agent_id, registered agents, identity etc.) of the process instance and task (message, service request, find/location agent; reference A: Paragraph 2, Page 8; Paragraph 3; Figure 4; reference B: Figure 5; reference D: Steps 1-2, Pages 10-11; reference E: Last Paragraph, Page 156);
- a status (service results, content, body; reference D: Section 4.1, Page 8; Section 4.2, Steps 1-4, Pages 10-11; reference E: Last Paragraph, Page 158) and
- process data (sub-packet, packet, group, etc.) of passed to a task (message, process manager; reference A: Paragraph 3, Page 9, Figure 4; reference B: Section 2.2, Page 6, Figures 3-4; reference E: Pages 157-158; Figure 5).

Regarding Claim 8 ADEPT teaches a computer-implemented method for managing collaborative multi-enterprise processes wherein a list of process roles (roles, agencies) for indicating logical participants of the collaborative process; wherein each work node has a task role that matches one of the process roles; and wherein a peer process having a process role that matches the task role of a work node is responsible for executing the work node (reference A: Pages 1-11; Figures 1-4; reference B: Pages 1-12; Figures 1-2, 6-7 and 10; reference D: Pages 1-3; Figures 1-5).

Regarding Claim 9 ADEPT teaches a computer-implemented method for managing collaborative multi-enterprise processes providing a collaborative process definition language (service description, service language, common communication language/mechanism, process description, process modeling) for defining the collaborative business process (reference A: Section 2.1, Pages 4-6; reference B: Section 2.2, Pages 6-8; reference D: Section 4.1, Pages 8-9; reference E: Paragraph 1, Page 148; Last Paragraph, Page 155; Figure 1).

Regarding Claim 11 ADEPT teaches a computer-implemented method for managing multi-enterprise collaborative processes wherein the step of specifying the sharing scope of at least one template (process) includes setting the sharing scope as public (open, shared, accessible, shared information, etc.) wherein a data object is public (accessible, shared, etc.; information model, information sharing, etc.; reference B: Section 2.2, Pages 6-7; Figures 3-4; reference D: Section 4.1, Pages 8-9; Step 3,

Art Unit: 3623

Page 8; reference E: Bullets 3-6, Page 168; Paragraph 3, Page 172; Paragraph 1, Page 174).

Regarding Claims 12 and 13 ADEPT teaches a computer-implemented method for managing multi-enterprise collaborative processes wherein specifying the (sharing) scope further comprises setting the (sharing) scope as process-role specific for a particular process role (two or more) wherein the process is accessible only to the process-role specified (reference E: Bullets 3-6, Page 168; Paragraph 3, Page 172; Paragraph 1, Page 174).

Art Unit: 3623

7. Claim 5 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Advanced Decision Environment for Process Tasks (ADEPT) aspects of which are discussed in the following references:

I. Norman, T.J., et al. Designing and implementing a multi-agent architecture for business process management (1996) herein after reference A.

II. Jennings, N.R. et al., Using Intelligent Agents to Manage Business Processes (1996) herein after reference B.

III. Alty, J.L. et al., Advanced Decision Environment for Process Tasks: Overview and Architecture (1994) herein after reference D.

IV. Jennings, N.R. et al., Autonomous Agents for Business Process Management (2000), herein after reference E.

in view of Schulz et al., Architecting Cross-Organizational B2B Integration (2000) as applied to claims 1-4, 6-9 and 11-13 above and further in view of Workflow Management Coalition Workflow Standard Interoperability (1998), herein after WPMC.

Regarding Claim 5 ADEPT teaches a computer-implemented method for managing a collaborative multi-enterprise process, as discussed above, wherein the step of determining the current task is not the responsibility of the collaborative (first) process manager not executing the task further comprises (error/exception handling; start, stop, resume, renegotiate processes/collaborations having errors/exceptions; reference B: Paragraphs 3-4, Page 4; Paragraphs 1-2, Page 5; reference E: Paragraphs 2-3, Page 163):

- evaluating the current task return message to determine whether an error/exception has occurred;
- when an error/exception has occurred, queuing (saving, holding, etc.) the task (return message) for later processing; and
- when an error/exception has not occurred processing the next task by employing the return message.

ADEPT does not expressly teach that the error/exception is an out-of-order condition as claimed.

WFMC further teaches detecting and acting upon a plurality of message errors including but not limited to “out of sequence messages”, “out-of-conversation”, lost messages, duplicate messages and the like (Pages 8, 13-14, error message 207 invalid sequence) via the management of “conversations” between the two or more workflow management systems (process synchronization) in an analogous art of process management for the purposes of enabling multiple process management systems (workflow management systems) to interoperate/collaborate (Sections 2 and 5, Page 5).

It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art that the inter-enterprise collaborative process management system as taught by ADEPT would have benefited from detecting and acting upon out of sequence/order messages being exchanged amongst the collaborative process managers (i.e. conversation management) in view of

Art Unit: 3623

the teachings of WFMC; the resultant system/method enabling multiple process management systems (workflow management systems) to interoperate/collaborate (WFMC: Sections 2 and 5, Page 5).

8. Claims 14-15 and 17-20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Advanced Decision Environment for Process Tasks (ADEPT) aspects of which are discussed in the following references:

- I. Norman, T.J., et al. Designing and implementing a multi-agent architecture for business process management (1996) herein after reference A.
 - II. Jennings, N.R. et al., Using Intelligent Agents to Manage Business Processes (1996) herein after reference B.
 - III. Alty, J.L. et al., Advanced Decision Environment for Process Tasks: Overview and Architecture (1994) herein after reference D.
 - IV. Jennings, N.R. et al., Autonomous Agents for Business Process Management (2000), herein after reference E.
- in view of Management Coalition Workflow Standard Interoperability (1998), herein after WPMC.

Regarding Claim 14 ADEPT teaches a system for allowing a first player in a first enterprise to collaborate with a second player in a second enterprise comprising (reference A: Pages 1-11; Figures 1-4; reference B: Pages 1-12; Figures 1-2, 6-7 and 10; reference D: Pages 1-3; Figures 1-5):

- a collaborative business process definition specified by a collaborative process definition language (reference A: Paragraph 4, Page 2; Figure 1) and based on an inter-enterprise business collaboration protocol (SDL, ACL, etc.; reference E: Last Paragraph Page 156; Last Paragraph, Page 163), the collaborative business process

Art Unit: 3623

definition having a plurality of work nodes (collaborative agents providing and requesting tasks and services; reference A: Paragraph 1, Page 4; Figure 2), each work node having a task role (reference B: "sales", "marketing", Paragraphs 1-2, Page 3; Figure 1);

- first/second of collaborative process managers executing first/second (peer) process instances of the collaborative business process (definition), the one or more peer process instances having a role (services agents provide/receive, agents representing departments, organizations, individuals, etc.); wherein the one or more peer process instances is responsible only for work nodes (agents/agencies) that have a role (services, tasks, etc.) that matches (related to, associated with, collaborate with) the role of the one or more peer instances (hierarchy of agents/agencies that collaboratively execute one or more instances/executions of the business process; reference A: Paragraph 3, Page 3; Footnote 1; Page 3; Paragraphs 1-2, Page 4; Paragraph 5, Page 2; Figure 2; reference B: Figure 2);

- a peer-to-peer communication mechanism for enabling data exchange and synchronization between the plurality of (first and second) peer process instances (reference A: Page 2, Section 2.1, Paragraph 1, Lines 5-8; Section 2.2 Inter-agent communication, Pages 4-6; Page 7, Section 3, Paragraphs 1-2; Section 3.1 Communication, Pages 8-9; reference B: Page 4, Paragraph 3, Communications Module); and

- an error/exception handling mechanism wherein collaborative processes can be terminated, stopped, started, resume and/or renegotiated based on the

error/exception (reference B: Paragraphs 3-4, Page 4; Paragraphs 1-3, Page 5; reference E: Paragraphs 2-3, Page 163).

ADEPT does not expressly teach that the system comprises an *out-of-order* handler mechanism for receiving messages from other collaborative process managers, determining whether messages are received out of order and when messages are received out of order halting execution and when messages are not out of order continuing the execution as claimed.

WFMC teach an out-of-order handler mechanism for receiving messages from other collaborative process managers, determining whether messages are received out of order ("out of sequence messages", "out-of-conversation", lost messages, duplicate messages and the like (Pages 8, 13-14, error message 207 invalid sequence) and when messages are received out of order halting execution and when messages are not out of order continuing the execution in an analogous art of collaborative process management for the purposes of for the purposes of enabling multiple process management systems (workflow management systems) to interoperate/collaborate (Sections 2 and 5, Page 5).

It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time of the invention that the system for allowing a first player in a first enterprise to collaborate with a second player in a second enterprise as taught by ADEPT would have benefited from

Art Unit: 3623

incorporating an out-of-order handler mechanism for receiving messages from other collaborative process managers, determining whether messages are received out of order in view of the teachings of WFMC the resultant system/method enabling process management systems/methods to interoperate/collaborate (WFMC: Sections 2 and 5, Page 5).

Regarding Claim 15 ADEPT a system for allowing a first player in a first enterprise to collaborate with a second player in a second enterprise further comprising a communication module (message generator) for generating a plurality of messages for the collaborative process manager (service execution, situation assessment, communication, and interaction modules; reference A: Section 3, Pages 7-11; Figures 1-3; reference B: Figure 7; negotiation, resource management and enactment modules; reference D: Section 4, Pages 8-12).

Regarding Claim 17 ADEPT a system for allowing a first player in a first enterprise to collaborate with a second player in a second enterprise further comprising a private (secure, confidential, etc.) sub-process (processes, services, sub-services) manager (agents, agencies, virtual agency, sub-agents) selectively making process data (objects, services, messages) private (confidential, secure, etc.) to a particular collaborative process manager (reference E: "The communication channel between any two negotiating agents is private.", Bullet 5, Page 168; Bullets 3-6, Page 168).

Regarding Claim 18 ADEPT a system for allowing a first player in a first enterprise to collaborate with a second player in a second enterprise further comprising a role determination module (situation assessment module, interaction module, service execution module; reference B: section 2.1, Pages 4-5) for receiving the task (request for service, message; reference D: Steps 1-2, Page 10), for determining whether the current task is the responsibility of the collaborative process manager (situation assessment, negotiation, interaction module; evaluate proposals; reference B: Paragraph 4, Page 4; reference D: Steps 2-4; Pages 10-11), when the current task is the responsibility of the collaborative process manager (enactment, action, accepting proposal, providing/executing request service; invoke service; service level agreement, contract, etc.; reference B: Pages 3, 5; Paragraph 3, Page 4; reference D: Step 4, Pages 10-11), for scheduling and dispatching the task for execution, when the task is not the responsibility of the collaborative process manager, not executing the task (service execution, situation assessment, communication, and interaction modules; (reference B: Paragraph 4, Page 4; reference D: Step 3, Pages 10-11; reference A: Section 3, Pages 7-11; Figures 1-3; reference B: Figure 7; negotiation, resource management and enactment modules).

Regarding Claim 19 ADEPT a system for allowing a first player in a first enterprise to collaborate with a second player in a second enterprise employing messages for synchronizing the peer process instances (collaborative agents/agencies) and for exchanging data between process instances; wherein each message includes

Art Unit: 3623

(reference A: Page 2, Section 2.1, Paragraph 1, Lines 5-8; Section 2.2 Inter-agent communication, Pages 4-6; Page 7, Section 3, Paragraphs 1-2; Section 3.1 Communication, Pages 8-9; reference B: Page 4, Paragraph 3, Communications Module):

- a key (cooperation key, handle, identifier, etc.) for specifying (identifying, accessing, requesting, participating in) a logical process instance (conversationID, informoID, etc.; reference A: Page 9; Figure 4; reference B: agent negotiation, Section 2.3, Page 8);

- a local handle (name, address, agent_id, registered agents, identity etc.) of the process instance and task (message, service request, find/location agent; reference A: Paragraph 2, Page 8; Paragraph 3; Figure 4; reference B: Figure 5; reference D: Steps 1-2, Pages 10-11);

- a status (service results, content, body; reference D: Section 4.1, Page 8; Section 4.2, Steps 1-4, Pages 10-11) and

- process data (sub-packet, packet, group, etc.) of passed to a task (message, process manager; reference A: Paragraph 3, Page 9, Figure 4; reference B: Section 2.2, Page 6, Figures 3-4).

Regarding Claim 20 ADEPT teaches a system for allowing a first player in a first enterprise to collaborate with a second player in a second enterprise wherein a list of process roles (roles, agencies) for indicating logical participants of the collaborative process; wherein each work node has a task role that matches one of the process roles;

Art Unit: 3623

and wherein a peer process having a process role that matches the task role of a work node is responsible for executing the work node (reference A: Pages 1-11; Figures 1-4; reference B: Pages 1-12; Figures 1-2, 6-7 and 10; reference D: Pages 1-3; Figures 1-5).

Conclusion

The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.

- Olsen et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,519,642, teach a system and method for managing cross-organization collaborative processes wherein the cross-enterprise processes are shared automated business processes/workflows that are executed using shared/public process definitions (templates) and further wherein processes have public and/or private sharing scopes. Olsen et al. further teach that there are at least five known methods for managing/integrating multi-enterprise collaborate processes (systems) including but not limited to manual (fax, paper), EDI, custom systems, Internet-EDI and middle-ware (messaging).

- Hellbusch et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,647,420, teach a system/method for managing inter-enterprise collaborative processes amongst a plurality of enterprises wherein the system/method provides for defining and managing both public and private processes.

- Stewart et al., U.S. Patent Publication No. 2001/0039570, teach a system/method for managing inter-enterprise collaborative processes.

- Ghoneimy et al., U.S. Patent Publication No. 2004/0078373, teach a system/method for managing collaborative inter-enterprise business processes comprising templates and conversation management.

- Atluri et al., Enforcing Mandatory and Discretionary Security in Workflow Management Systems (1996) teach the utilization of authorization templates that enable

workflow management systems to provide multilevel secure workflow transactions (workflow authorization model). Alturi et al. further teach several known methods for providing role and task based authorizations (security, scope, etc.) in workflow management systems for both intra-workflow and inter-workflows.

- Merz et al., Interorganizational Workflow Management with Mobile Agents in COSM (1996) teach a computer-implemented method/system for managing a collaborative process involving a plurality of enterprises wherein the system/method comprises mobile agents, general process descriptions (templates), messaging, roles and services.

- Sladek et al., Modeling Inter-Organizational Workflows (1996) teaches a method for modeling collaborative processes amongst a plurality of organizations (enterprises) wherein the methods enables entities/users to encapsulate the intra-organizational aspects of the collaborative business processes (private/public sharing scope).

- Chen et al., Dynamic-Agents for Dynamic Service Provisioning (1998) teach a method/system for managing collaborative business processes utilizing a plurality of agents (process managers, request brokers, resource broker, etc.).

- Hiramatsu et al., Interworkflow System: Coordination of Each Workflow System Among Multiple Organizations (1998) teach a system/method for managing collaborative processes amongst a plurality of enterprises wherein each entity collaborates using private and public (shared, internal, external, autonomous, etc.) processes.

Art Unit: 3623

- Sturim, Robert, Achieving Competitive Advantage through Supply Chain Integration (1999) teaches a commercially available system/method for managing collaborative multi-enterprise business processes (workflows) comprising: transaction management, security (access control, authentication, etc.), messaging and shared business processes.

- Anderson et al., Workflow Interoperability – Enabling E-Commerce (1999) teaches method for managing collaborative processes involving a plurality of enterprises comprising defining inter-enterprise collaborative business processes including templates (standards).

- eBusiness: Extending the Enterprise (1999) teaches a commercially available system and method for managing collaborative multi-enterprise/organizational processes (extended enterprise, virtual enterprise) comprising inter-enterprise collaborative business processes, multiple collaborative process managers, a common business process language and messaging. The paper further teaches the systems/method's utilization of well known collaborative business process templates (standards) such as RosettaNet wherein RosettaNet and BusinessWare together enable businesses to manage both internal/private and public/shared (exposed process interfaces, RosettaNet PIPs) business processes.

- Atwood, Richard, Bringing Process Automation to Bear on the Task of Business Integration (1999) teaches a commercially available system/method for managing collaborative processes.

- Lazcano et al., The WISE approach to Electronic Commerce (2000) teaches a system/method for managing collaborative business processes amongst a plurality of enterprises wherein business provide public interfaces (business services) to private processes in order to facilitate virtual enterprise business processes.

- Bergelin, Joakim, Business Process Integration Methodology – A Study of RosettaNet (2000) teaches a method for managing collaborative processes involving multiple organizations/enterprises using well known collaborative business process templates (RosettaNet, BizTalk), business process brokers (collaborative process managers), message brokers, a common business process modeling language and well known technology standards (XML, EDI, etc.). Bergelin further teaches RosettaNet supports the definition of work nodes, roles, public/shared processes (partner interface process, PIPs) and secure communications/messaging between organizations/enterprises.

- Jennings, N.R. et al., Implementing A Business Process Management System Using ADEPT (2000) teaches a system/method for managing collaborative processes using a plurality of process managers.

- Extricity.com Web Pages (2000) teaches a commercially available system/method for managing collaborative processes that involve multi-enterprises/organizations wherein both public/shared processes and private/internal processes are managed thereby enabling enterprises to “isolate internal systems from internal business processes from shared processes”. The web Pages further teach

Art Unit: 3623

Extricity's involvement in RosettaNet as well as the method/system's support for conversation management and sequence validation of RosettaNet's PIP message exchanges.

- Vitria.com Web Pages (2000) teaches a commercially available system and method for managing collaborative multi-enterprise business processes comprising public/private processes (sharing scope), message sequence validation, business process templates (e.g. RosettaNet), exception handling, role-specific tasks/work nodes, messaging and security management.

- Van der Aalst et al., The P2P Approach to Interorganizational Workflows (2001) teaches a system/method for managing Public-2-Private (P2P) inter-enterprise collaborative processes involving multiple enterprises wherein the system/method models (manages) private/public collaborative processes as classes/subclasses.

- BEA WebLogic Collaborate Enabler for RosettaNet – User Guide (2001) teaches a commercially available system/method for managing collaborative multi-enterprise business processes wherein the system/method defines a plurality of inter-enterprise collaborative business processes using templates that include tasks, work nodes, task role identifiers, definitions, messaging, message validation (message sequence validation, Pages 85-86), security and public/shared/private processes (sharing scope) and the like.

Art Unit: 3623

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Scott L. Jarrett whose telephone number is (571) 272-7033. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday, 8:00AM - 5:00PM.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Hafiz Tariq can be reached on (571) 272-6729. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

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